



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

PHILIPPINES

POPULATION AND HEALTH

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: DESIRED FAMILY SIZE AND IMPROVED HEALTH SUSTAINABLY ACHIEVED

BACKGROUND

Rapid population growth has been identified as one of the country's critical development problems. The extremely high annual population growth rate of 2.36% will continue to tap scarce resources and limit the country's potential for accelerating economic growth. The documented gap between actual fertility (3.5 children per woman) versus wanted fertility (2.5) in 2003 indicates the existence of a significant unmet need for family planning services and commodities. Thus, USAID programs will create opportunities for couples to make reproductive decisions by assuring that quality services and commodities are widely available to all who want them.



The overall nutritional status of women and children has been declining in recent years. Much remains to be done to reduce micronutrient deficiencies, the cause of higher morbidity. The Philippines also faces many challenges in containing infectious disease. The country has the dubious distinction of being among the top 10 high-burden tuberculosis countries in the world. The good news is that the HIV prevalence rate remains very low. Thus, USAID programs are also focused on tuberculosis prevention, food fortification, HIV/AIDS surveillance and prevention, and maternal and child health. These are important parts of and fully support the Philippine government's Health Agenda.

USAID's population and health strategy targets the greatest barriers to sustainable progress: the capacity of LGUs to implement public health programs, the underutilization of the private sector, the lack of social acceptance of family planning, and the need for policies and financing which determine resource allocation in the sector.

Intermediate Result 1: Strengthened LGU provision and management of FP/MCH/TB/HIV-AIDS services

The devolution of health services to local government units (LGUs) has left many of these LGUs ill-equipped to take on the new role of being the primary provider of basic health care services. USAID will assist in strengthening key management and logistics systems and encourage LGU providers to focus coverage on poor patients to avoid having poor people crowded out of available public services. USAID will also help strengthen systems and incentives for health managers to improve the quality of facilities and services. These all lead to greater LGU capability and accountability, both pre-requisites for long-term sustainability of health service provision.

Intermediate Result 2: Expanded Provision of quality services by private and commercial providers

USAID is helping to develop the private sector as an alternative source of health services. Of those seeking family planning services from the public sector, 61% belong to middle- and high-income groups and 67% expressed willingness to pay for family planning services and contraceptives. Shifting half of middle-income and all high-income users to the private sector will increase the current private sector share of the market by 10% and free up more public resources that would be available for the truly indigent population.

While tuberculosis treatment is widely available in the public sector, about half of patients are receiving TB treatment from private physicians and traditional healers. Many of them are not using modern treatment, thereby increasing the probability of spreading multi-resistant TB. A market for private sector FP services and TB treatment already exists and can be tapped by the private sector.

Intermediate Result 3: Greater social acceptance of family planning

While a majority of Filipinos perceive family planning as important to attaining a better quality of life, family planning remains controversial primarily due to opposition by certain sectors to the use of more effective modern contraceptives as well as misinformation on the safety of modern contraception. Thus, many of those desiring to limit their family size are reluctant to adopt these proven effective methods, and some health practitioners are also inhibited from providing family planning services.

To increase social acceptance of family planning, USAID is actively helping its partners to promote and communicate the practice of family planning as a normal, everyday behavior that is part of a healthy lifestyle. These partners include consumers, opinion leaders and providers who encourage couples to practice family planning in order to attain their desired family size and improve the health of their families.

Intermediate Result 4: Improved Policy Environment for Financing and Provision of Services

The expanded delivery of FP/MCH/TB DOTS/HIV-AIDS services has been hampered by unrealistic or outdated legal and regulatory barriers and the absence of appropriate supportive policies or guidelines both at the national and local levels. USAID programs will analyze these policy gaps, institute measures to address them, and develop mechanisms and tools to effectively implement the policies.

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